

**Excerpt from *Action Plan for Menopause*, by Barbara Bushman, PhD and Janice Clark Young, EdD**

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*Action Plan for Menopause*

Barbara Bushman, PhD and Janice Clark Young, EdD

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**Sleep, Memory, and Mood Changes  
From Chapter 1: Thriving With Hormonal Changes**

Other changes occur around the time of menopause. You may experience menopause-related sleep problems. Disturbances in sleeping are likely related to night sweats. You may be awakened by night sweats and be unable to return to sleep. Even if you do not awaken, your sleep may be disturbed (Joffe, Soares, and Cohen 2003). A regular exercise program is recommended for reducing stress and improving sleep quality (NAMS 2003).

Also consider your sleep routine. Small changes you make in your approach to sleep may reward you with a restful night. Try to avoid the following:

- Heavy meals late at night
- Alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine
- Exercise too close to bedtime
- Other activities in the bedroom, such as watching TV

Other suggestions to improve sleep include creating a relaxing environment that is quiet, cool, and dark. Keep a regular sleep schedule as much as possible, including getting up at the same time (even on weekends). For those with continued sleep disturbances, consultation with your physician is appropriate to rule out other disorders (e.g., allergies, thyroid problems, anemia, breathing problems such as apnea) (NAMS 2003).

With age, you may also experience memory problems—especially short-term memory. Whether these changes are associated with changing hormone levels or are simply due to general effects of aging is not fully known. Both men and women do experience short-term memory problems during middle age.

Other potential changes in your mood or behavior are also unlikely to be linked physiologically to menopause. “There are no scientific studies that support the

belief that natural menopause contributes to true clinical depression, anxiety, severe memory lapses, or erratic behavior” (NAMS 2003, 12). Shifts in mood may be related to many factors, including sleep disturbances (and the associated fatigue) or other stresses in life that go hand in hand with the approach of menopause. For example, changes may occur in the family unit, such as children moving away or aging parents becoming more reliant on you. You may juggle many roles within your family in addition to work responsibilities and community involvement. The issue of stress and how to deal with it is covered in detail in chapter 7.